

Aim of lesson

To show that believing and following God’s words brings a greater victory than all human strength put together can achieve.

Bible background

2 Chronicles 17; 19; 20.

Outline of lesson

The Divided Kingdom

You may like to begin the lesson by looking together at the chart of the kings of Israel and Judah, at the start of the workbook. The effect of the division of the kingdom at the time of Rehoboam can be seen. About twenty kings of Judah reigning in Jerusalem, and twenty kings of Israel (reigning for a much shorter time) follow the events of the last lesson. Some of the kings of Judah were good kings following God’s ways, but more were bad kings following their own ways and bringing in idolatry. In Israel the picture was much worse. None of the kings of Israel chose to follow God’s ways wholeheartedly.

Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat was one of the good kings of Judah. He was the great-grandson of Rehoboam. His father, Asa, had followed God during some of his life, but at the end had not sought the Lord. Jehoshaphat begins with energy and enthusiasm to do God’s will. He removes idol worship and sees the need to teach the people God’s law.

The class should look at 2 Chronicles 17:1-10 and 19:4-11, before discussing the task of the judges and teachers whom Jehoshaphat appointed. The first page of the lesson in the workbook can be used to summarise some of their ideas.

Invasion

2 Chronicles 20 gives the account of a most amazing victory. A vast army from three nations began an attack on the kingdom of Judah. They had invaded the land from the south east and were heading for Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat turns to God and prays in front of the temple before all the people, v6-12. An answer is given immediately. God gives a message to a man called Jahaziel. They are to march out against the armies. They are told exactly where they will meet them, but they are also told that they will not have to fight!

Deliverance

Trusting in God, Jehoshaphat set out with his people early the next morning. Since they believed God when he said they would not have to fight, instead of putting warriors at the front of the column of people, Jehoshaphat put singers at the front. They went out to meet the invaders, singing praise to God. The words of praise recorded are the opening verse of Psalm 136. It is possible that they used the whole psalm and that everyone joined in the refrain ‘for his mercy endureth for ever’. Certainly the words are appropriate. Verse 24 would be especially apt for singing on the way back. It is also part of the psalm David used when he brought the ark to Jerusalem, 1 Chronicles 16:34,41.

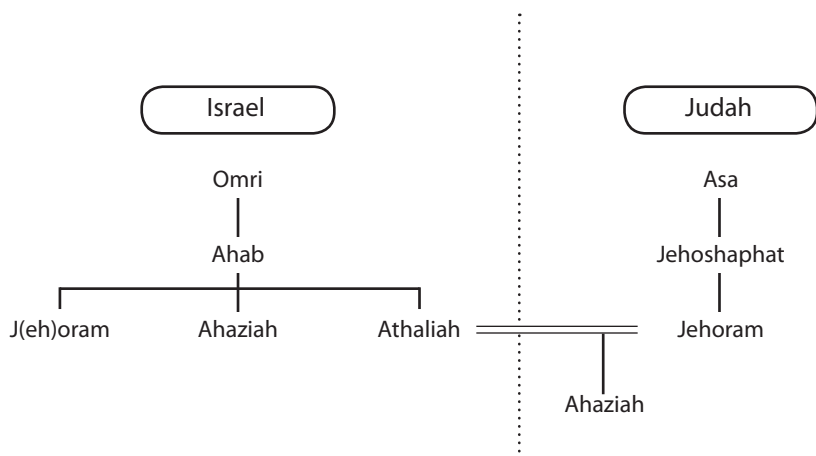
Afterwards

Ask the class to record the events in their own words for the Judah Chronicle and write what they think Jehoshaphat would tell us about God if we could ask him. This can include ideas from God’s deliverance of Jehoshaphat and his people, but is primarily intended to encourage the class to look at the prayer of Jehoshaphat and note all that he tells us there about God.

Digging deeper

Jehoshaphat’s family

This section looks in greater detail at Jehoshaphat’s background and family tree. The family tree is quite difficult to work out, and it is not helped by the fact that there are two kings who are variously called Joram or Jehoram, and two others called Ahaziah. However, the finished tree should look something like this:



Relevance to our lives

Just as it did not seem 'sensible' to place the singers at the head of the army, so Jesus' teaching to 'turn the other cheek' when someone hits us may seem impracticable. You could discuss with the class the way in which this can produce a much greater victory in our lives than ever could be gained by hitting back.

Prayer

The ideas about God learnt 2 Chronicles 20 could be used to form a prayer of praise, in their own words.

Other suggestions for activities

- A map of the land of Israel showing the position of the nations which invaded and the route of the people from Jerusalem could be drawn and labelled.
- The class could write a letter from one of the singers to a friend, telling him/her about the events, and how he felt before and after the victory.
- A large time chart could be made either from Abraham to the present day or from David to Jesus. The class could fill in David, Solomon, Rehoboam and Jeroboam and any other notable characters they wish to. As the lessons progress they could fill in the names of the other kings and prophets as they learn about them, using different colours for Israel and Judah.
- Psalm 136 could be read at the end of Sunday School with different members of the class reading different verses and everyone joining in the refrain.